THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
MANAGER'S REPORT

DATE ISSUED: August 3, 2000   REPORT NO. 00-162

ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing Committee
               Agenda of August 9, 2000

SUBJECT: Item 2 - Status Report and Action Plan for Technical Advisory Committee

REFERENCE: Manager's Report 00-50, dated March 10, 2000

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

On March 15, 2000, the Land Use and Housing Committee approved the appointment of a revised Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to investigate options to improve the performance and customer service in the land and building development review process. This committee convened in June 2000 and has since worked diligently to identify an action plan to improve the permitting process.

DISCUSSION

The TAC has organized itself into four subcommittees to deal with specific options and recommendations to improve permit processing. These committees are E-Permitting, Plan Submittal Templates, Self Certification, and Inspection Services. Each subcommittee has met to discuss options and formulate action items which have been summarized in Attachment 1.

E-Permitting - The focus of this subcommittee has been to explore opportunities to provide more information and services on-line through the City's website. These items fall into the following categories:

- Improve the design, functionality, and content of the existing website
- Provide on-line project information
- Provide on-line project services such as no plan permits and electronic plan checking

The Department has retained a consultant and will be working with Information Technology and Communications (IT&C) to redesign and implement improvements to the City's website for customers of the development process. Development is in the final phases of new project tracking software to replace legacy mainframe systems which have been in existence since the late 1980's. This software will be completed within the next six months with full implementation to occur six months thereafter and is being programmed to be Internet capable, which will allow more project data to be displayed on the website. The subcommittee is also working with IT&C to pilot a "low-tech" electronic plan check program which can be implemented with existing equipment and Internet access.

Plan Submittal Templates - Both the Zero Based Management Review Committee and the TAC have identified opportunities in the plan submittal process to reduce plan check times and resubmittals. A pilot program to utilize standardized "templates" to organize plan check information is being developed. These templates will be part of a Preferred Plan Check Program which provides incentives, in the form of reduced plan check turnaround times, for applicants that agree to follow the standardized templates. Also being investigated are the expansion of programs which handle smaller projects through Over-The-Counter (OTC) plan check and Homeowners Night.

Self Certification - The Department has implemented self-certification for the Master Plan Program and is finalizing implementation of similar programs for minor civil engineering permits and landscape plan check; projects will be subject to final approval in the inspection process. These programs will save both time and cost in the plan check process and place greater responsibility for compliance with the respective code on the design professional.

Inspection Services - A key theme in the inspection process is to improve communication of inspection results. This can be accomplished both through the use of technology and improving internal procedures for updating inspection status. Another area of focus is improving customer service by increasing the problem solving ability of inspectors at the job site. A Customer Service Policy is being developed Department-wide to emphasize the importance of responsiveness to the public.

The action plan includes a tentative schedule based upon initial discussions with each subcommittee on the scope of work of each item. The plan will be updated regularly to reflect the status of existing items as well as any new initiatives developed by the TAC.

Respectfully submitted,

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Planning and Development Review Director   Assistant City Manager

CHRISTIANSEN/SMH

Attachment: 1. Land Use & Housing Technical Advisory Committee
                      Subcommittee Action Plan Recommendations

Land Use & Housing Technical Advisory Committee
Subcommittee Action Plan Recommendations
August 2000

Item No.	TAC Recommendation	Status	Schedule
1	**E-PERMITTING**		
1.a	Enhance the Planning & Development Review website so that it is more user friendly and includes more on-line information such as information bulletins and fee schedules.	Staff has retained an outside consultant and is working with IT&C to redesign the website to be more user friendly and include more information currently available in paper format.	Complete design by November 2000; implement design within three to six months.
1.b	Improve website functionality by providing search by word.	The existing website has search capability by keywords. Staff will investigate improving the search engine capability as part of the website redesign (see 1.a).	Complete design by November 2000; implement design within three to six months.
1.c	Provide access to real-time project processing information on-line.	Currently the Plan Finder function allows the public to receive a plan check status by entering a Plan File Number. New project tracking software will include additional functionality to view project review status, comments, and schedule.	August 2001.
1.d	Provide the ability to estimate fees for a project.	The new tracking system will include a fee estimator for staff and the public to make basis fee estimates for certain project descriptions (see 1.c).	August 2001.
1.e	Provide ability to process no-plan permits on-line.	Certain no-plan permits are currently offered by Fax. Staff will coordinate with IT&C to implement the ability to offer the same permits on the website.	January 2001.
1.f	Provide enhanced geographic information, such as zoning, on the website.	Currently the department utilizes over 100 data layers on its own internal local area network. Some of this data is currently published on the Internet through SanGIS. Staff is updating and converting the existing zoning information to an electronic format as budgetary resources allow.	Four years or less, depending on available funding.
1.g	Pilot electronic review of building plans.	Staff is partnering with several committee members to evaluate on-line electronic plan check services.	September 2000
1.h	Investigate best practices of other cities in the area of E-permitting.	Staff will visit the cities of Anaheim and Los Angles and the County of Los Angeles to review their current e-permitting capabilities and report back to the committee.	Mid-August 2000.

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Item No.	TAC Recommendation	Status	Schedule
2	**Plan Submittal Templates**		
2.a	Create an enhanced standardized submittal template for building projects in order to streamline the review process.	Staff and the subcommittee are reviewing proposals for standardizing submittal information. This will be piloted as a voluntary program which will offer reduced review time for those projects that fully comply with the enhanced submittal requirements.	Finalize templates and develop procedures for Preferred Plan Check Program in August 2000. Implement pilot in Sept/Oct 2000. Finalize program for all customers in Nov/Dec 2000.
2.b	Provide complete submittal requirements on-line.	As part of the implementation of the Land Development Code, all submittal requirements are currently under review. Once completed, these will be included in the redesign of the website (see 1.a).	Complete design by November 2000; implement design within three to six months.
2.c	Increase over-the-counter (OTC) plan check services to include more project types which require two to three hour plan check appointments.	Staff will pilot an expanded OTC service program to an expanded list of residential and commercial projects. This service will be offered by appointment only and will allow design professionals to work face-to face with City staff to finalize plans and issue permits.	November 2000.
2.d	Expand Homeowners Night.	Staff will look to expand Homeowners Night by adding additional staff, offering additional nights for the service, and providing the service to Community Service Centers.	October 2000.

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3	**Self Certification of Certain Project Plan Checks**		
3.a	Identify project types for self-certifying plan check for licensed professionals, such as Title 24 Energy plan check.	The department has implemented self certification in three arenas; Master Plan Projects, minor civil engineering projects, and Landscape Plan Check. Staff will review other project types requiring building plan check for opportunities to allow self certification.	November 2000.
3.b	Outsource the plan check function for building code compliance to handle increases in workload	Since May 2000, the department has outsourced plan check for minor projects to local area firms. This will be enable the department to manage workload spikes and maintain service levels.	Completed.
3.c	Outsource discipline specific review, such as structural review, for large projects.	Staff will develop an "as needed" list to allow certain projects to retain outside firms for a component of the plan check process. The first phase of this recommendation will target structural plan check requirements.	November 2000.
3.d	Improve training to increase consistency of code interpretation.	Outreach programs will be developed for staff and design professionals to discuss code issues and formulate agreed upon interpretations which can then be published.	October 2000.
3.e	Expand Express Plan Check to all review disciplines.	A revised Express Plan Check Program to require additional plan sets in order to expand review to all disciplines is currently under implementation. Overall fees will be based upon the existing Express Plan Check fees approved by City Council in November 1999.	Under implementation.

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4	**Inspection Services**		
4.a	Provide inspectors greater access to communication devices, such as voice mail, e-mail, and Internet access.	Staff will provide individual telephone numbers and voice mail accounts for all inspectors. Inspectors are provided access to computers, however, they are currently limited in their ability to access these devices to the first 45 minutes in the morning of their shift. Community Service Centers may provide an opportunity in some areas to access e-mail and the Internet on a more frequent basis.	September 2000.
4.b	Provide inspectors the ability to immediately update inspection results.	Procedures will be developed to provide more timely feedback to the Field Office for inspection results. Staff will also investigate creating an Inspection Results feature on the website (see 1.a).	September 2000.
4.c	Increase Customer Service Focus	The department is finalizing a Customer Service Statement and Policy to be implemented department-wide. This will be measured by increasing customer surveys, including survey results for individual employees, and implementing a previous TAC recommendation to recognize and reward employees who provide excellent customer service.	October 2000.